Media in Reading & Language Arts

* Ask students to name ways that they **use media to document and store memories** and experiences from their lives. Possible answers could include photographs, letters, journals and home video. Encourage students to bring in examples. What strengths and weaknesses does each medium have when used to document an event? Which presents the most accurate picture of the experience being documented? Have students apply what they've learned by documenting an upcoming school event.
* Some movies, television series or programs are based on a book or other literary work. Choose an example and have students **compare the printed form with the media production**. How are they alike and different? Which do students prefer and why? How do media variables influence characters, plot, themes and the setting?
* Ask students to count the ads they see or hear for a whole day. This might include billboards, flyers left on car windshields and logos on clothes. As students share results, ask them to **define what's advertising and what's not**: a label on a sweater? A name on a mailbox at a private residence? Together, create a definition for "advertisement."
* **Evaluate Web sites** -- a great training ground for media literacy. Who sponsors the site? How long has the site been around and do you know how often it is updated? Do links work? Are sources provided for quotations, research results, etc.? What type of bias might the publisher have about the site's topic? How does it compare with similar sites? Write site reviews and develop evaluation rubrics. Check out Madison Metropolitan School District's [Library of Student-Recommended Sites](http://www.madison.k12.wi.us/tnl/detectives/) for some sample site reviews from middle school students.
* Ask students to work in groups to **evaluate the credibility of information sources**. Each group should gather at least three information samples (i.e., brochure, news report, etc.) about the same topic. Who is providing the information in each case? What do you know about this information source? Does this person or organization seem to have anything to gain based on the information provided?
* Increase student awareness of **advertising at your school** (e.g., book covers, posters, student clothing with prominent logos) by having students collect examples or take digital pictures of commercial messages they see in classrooms, hallways, the cafeteria, sports fields or other places at school. Engage students in an analysis of the ads. What do they sell and why? How do the advertisers use colors, music, editing, etc. to appeal to you? Is advertising appropriate at school? Then, have students organize their examples and analysis in an online slide show or poster display.